



**Research Product 2011-02**

**Instructor's Peer-to-Peer Learning Guide for the Army  
Reconnaissance Course**

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**November 2010**

**Fort Hood Research Unit**

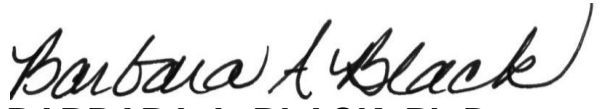
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# INSTRUCTOR’S PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING GUIDE FOR THE ARMY RECONNAISSANCE COURSE

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# INSTRUCTOR'S PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING GUIDE FOR THE ARMY RECONNAISSANCE COURSE

## Introduction

The Army Reconnaissance Course (ARC) at Fort Knox, Kentucky, is transitioning to an outcomes-based training approach. The purpose of the ARC is “to prepare commissioned officers and NCOs to perform effectively as leaders of recon platoons in the modular force” (Perry & McEnery, 2009, p. 14). The specialized leader’s course develops measurable skills and intangible attributes in Soldiers who must perform in the full spectrum operational environment. The full spectrum environment requires Soldiers to apply adaptive thinking and critical judgment to meet highly unpredictable challenges (U.S. Department of the Army, 2008). The importance of attributes such as confidence, accountability, initiative, and problem solving is reflected in the evolving ARC program of instruction (Etheridge, 2009). The ARC transition opens the door to harnessing innovative methods such as peer-to-peer (P2P) training.

As part of the ARC transition, the course leaders have adopted P2P training techniques into the program of instruction. The P2P training approach teaches knowledge, skills and attributes through the interaction of equal-status individuals, rather than a traditional teacher-student relationship (Costanza, Leibrecht, Cooper, & Sanders, 2009b). Soldiers learn from other Soldiers who have gained valuable insights through practical experience. The innovative P2P methods are rooted in sound learning principles and focus on building knowledge, skills and attributes through group learning. In the ARC environment, instructors guide the P2P learning process by structuring collaborative activities of small groups and assessing student progress. As the ARC program expands its use of P2P methods, the need arises for a tool to help instructors put the new methods into practice.

To meet the need, the U.S. Army Research Institute (ARI) has developed the *Instructor’s Peer-to-Peer Learning Guide for the ARC*. The Guide serves as a resource that helps the cadre to (a) improve their P2P training capabilities, (b) prepare for P2P learning activities, (c) facilitate collaborative learning, and (d) assess the results of P2P activities. The Guide contains self-study materials, application guidelines, how-to suggestions (best practices), and job aids. The ultimate goal is to enhance the achievement of desired ARC outcomes by expanding and improving the P2P learning processes.

By utilizing the P2P Learning Guide, ARC instructors and leaders can realize the following benefits:

- Become more effective learning agents through improved competencies as P2P learning facilitators.
- More fully empower students by promoting self-responsibility for learning and collaborative sharing of knowledge and experience.
- Reduce lost teaching opportunities by anticipating and eliminating common threats to learning.
- More accurately track the development of attributes and skills among students, and tailor learning activities as needed.

- Save time and effort in preparing for P2P learning activities and assessing the results of the activities.
- Enhance the effectiveness of ARC training events by more fully exploiting the power of P2P learning.
- Contribute to instructors' professional development, with the aid of tools for assessing P2P training competencies.

This document explains how the *Instructor's Peer-to-Peer Learning Guide for the ARC* was developed and describes the final version of the guide. It also explains how to best utilize the guide. The complete guide is provided as Appendix A (.pdf file) and Appendix B (.ppt file to support tailoring of job aids by users). They are located on a CD attached to the back of this product. A companion report (Cooper, Leibrecht, Anderson, Topolski, Reeves, & Lickteig, in preparation) describes the research conducted to develop and evaluate the guide.

## Method

The research effort that produced the P2P Learning Guide involved close collaboration between ARI personnel and the ARC cadre. The steps included (a) review of the literature on P2P training, (b) development of the guide based on ARC needs, and (c) evaluation of the guide during two stages of operational implementation.

The goal of the literature review was to create a proven foundation for the ARC-focused guide. The review targeted the theoretical underpinnings of the P2P training approach as well as the instructional characteristics that would be suitable for ARC small group learning. Sources ranged from military publications to academic journals to subject matter textbooks (see Cooper et al., in preparation). The review yielded principles of P2P learning, best practices that foster effective training, and techniques for assessing intangible attributes and other learning outcomes. The relevance of the findings was determined by judging their suitability and potential utility for application in the ARC environment.

The development of the guide began with an informal needs analysis that included interviews of key ARC personnel and direct observation of course training events. The resulting list of high-priority needs was organized according to the preparation, execution, and assessment stages of ARC training. The list of needs served as the framework for selecting or adapting P2P learning principles and practices gleaned from the literature review. Educational materials and job aids were then developed with a focus on guidelines and tools to build recon leader skills and attributes in the context of the core goals of the ARC. As the practical materials emerged, they were integrated into a Soldier-friendly guide designed for easy use by instructors. The unit-oriented P2P training facilitator's guide developed earlier by Costanza, Leibrecht, Cooper, and Sanders (2009a) served as an initial model.

The guide underwent extensive evaluation and revision to incorporate feedback from ARC instructors and leaders. During development, the guide was reviewed and refined in successive cycles. In the first operational implementation, leaders and instructors utilized the guide during a pilot course and then provided feedback. Following revision of the guide, the implementation/evaluation procedures were repeated during a second course. Thus, ARC

instructors and leaders tested the guide and shaped its refinement during two separate operational testing periods.

### Description of Instructor's Guide

This section presents an overview of the *Instructor's Peer-to-Peer Learning Guide for the ARC*. The overview addresses the guide's contents, organization, and presentation style. The complete guide is included as part of this publication. Appendix A contains the primary version (.pdf file). Appendix B provides an editable version (.ppt file) so users can exercise the option to tailor job aids to their specific needs.

Tailored to the ARC learning environment, the instructor's guide offers an easy-to-use resource for self-study and application. The primary features include (a) minimum essential contents, (b) balanced mix of self-development and job aid items, (c) streamlined presentation of contents, (d) liberal use of charts and graphics, (e) Soldier-friendly packaging, (f) stand-alone capability, and (g) ready portability.

The minimum essential contents of the guide include educational information (e.g., P2P training basics), procedural guidelines (steps and techniques), and job aids containing how-to details. The final topics (see Table 1) are those found to contribute directly to the performance of ARC instructional duties. In addition, a front-end P2P utilization scenario illustrates how the guide can be employed in a tactical context. Taken as a whole, the limited scope of the contents helps ensure a level of detail suitable for rapidly assimilating the information.

Table 1

Topics Addressed in the Instructor's Guide

| Category                | Topics  |
|-------------------------|---|
| Educational Information | Purpose of the Guide – how it helps instructors                           |
|                         | Basics of P2P training – definition, how it fits in ARC, how it works     |
|                         | P2P learning process in ARC – plan/prepare, execute, assess               |
|                         | P2P best practices – enablers of collaborative learning                   |
|                         | Recon leader skills and attributes – definitions and descriptions         |
| Procedural Guidelines   | Setting P2P conditions – student and instructor responsibilities          |
|                         | P2P training techniques – how instructors can exploit learning principles |
|                         | P2P assessment guidelines – how to gauge student progress                 |
|                         | P2P assessment techniques – systematic steps and actions                  |
|                         | Recognizing P2P training opportunities – signs to look for                |
| How-To Job Aids         | Using guiding questions – definition, sample questions, when to step in   |
|                         | Exploiting P2P potential – specifics for each ARC skill and attribute     |
|                         | Using empowering statements – definition, sample statements, timing       |
|                         | Deterring threats to training – how to avoid instructional pitfalls       |
|                         | Student assessment – how to measure recon leader skills and attributes    |
|                         | Instructor assessment – metrics for P2P training competencies             |
|                         | Hotwash/AAR guide – systematic roll-up for student skills and attributes  |

The instructor's guide incorporates P2P learning principles throughout. Consistent with the P2P training approach, the guide expects students to take primary responsibility for their own learning. Strong emphasis is placed on building recon leader attributes and skills through active sharing and helping among equals. Thus, the P2P learning principles contribute to sound instructorship. In practical terms, the guide helps ARC students to learn quickly and readily from instructors and other students who have gained experience and insight in conducting full spectrum operations. The learning occurs best when it is facilitated by a cognizant student or instructor.

The nine "Educational Information" and "Procedural Guidelines" topics listed in Table 1 provide the main organizing structure of the Guide (see Appendix A, "This Guide Contains ..."). Each of the nine topics frames a section that contains just enough information for ARC instructional purposes. The sections follow a logical sequence that begins with general information and builds progressively through how-to guidelines. The sequence assumes the user will proceed in order through the sections to gain a systematic, comprehensive understanding of the P2P training methodology. Following the main sections are the eight job aids, ordered roughly according to their expected utility in the normal flow of P2P learning activities. Pointers embedded at strategic points in the main sections link the user to the job aids. In short, the organization of the guide is designed to facilitate self-development and job performance by the ARC instructors.

The presentation style of the guide is geared for Soldiers. The language of recon leaders is emphasized throughout. In lieu of prose, highly distilled "chunks" of information (e.g., short bullets, concise questions) is the norm. Nearly all information is packaged in chart or graphic form. Distinctive elements (e.g., bold or italicized font) serve to direct the user's attention and highlight critical information. Iconic graphics that encapsulate key process features are used at strategic points to relate ARC outcomes to P2P techniques. In essence, the guide's presentation features – streamlining, visual appeal, and familiar language – are designed to engage instructors in a positive, inviting milieu that encourages constructive utilization of the materials provided.

### Utilizing the Guide

Following a decision to adopt the instructor's guide for routine use, the ARC leaders have created a process for disseminating it at the organizational level. A course administrator maintains the electronic file on a network server accessible to all cadre members. Individual instructors typically print the complete file in hardcopy. This makes it easy to carry the pocket-size guide in all ARC learning environments. As new instructors join the cadre, they are directed to the guide on the server. (As a result of the research effort, ruggedized (laminated) copies of the guide are available in limited quantity.)

After obtaining a hardcopy of the guide, an instructor can study the educational sections to become familiar with P2P training approaches and learning processes. By reviewing the procedural guideline sections, he can then develop an understanding of the P2P training and assessment techniques. These steps are best accomplished as self-development activities in advance of student training events. The goal is to establish a solid P2P knowledge base for the instructor's role as a P2P learning facilitator.

To harness the guide as a job performance tool, a plan/prepare-execute-assess model works well. As the instructor *plans and prepares* for an approaching P2P training event, he/she selects training and assessment techniques from the guide's "techniques" sections. He/she targets specific empowering statements and guiding questions by reviewing the corresponding job aids. In addition, he/she uses the "Student Assessment" job aids to prepare assessment materials. If he chooses to tailor the guide's assessment job aids, he/she can use Appendix B (.ppt file) to create a custom form, expanding the size as desired. During *execution* of the event, the instructor can refer to the job aids for recognizing and exploiting P2P training opportunities as well as the job aid for deterring threats to training. Leveraging these tools will help keep the learning process on track and optimize student collaboration. *Assessment* occurs at targeted points during the event, with the instructor using the selected P2P learning assessment materials to measure where the students stand on recon leader attributes and skills.

To optimize their continuing self-development activities, the instructors can utilize the "Instructor Assessment" job aid to size up their expanding P2P training competencies, most likely at the end of a course. In private or in consultation with course leaders they can use the self-assessment results to decide what additional self-study or practice may be appropriate. This process can help the instructors become highly proficient P2P learning facilitators.

In the hands of the ARC cadre, the *Instructor's Peer-to-Peer Learning Guide for the ARC* can play an important role in preparing recon leaders for full spectrum operations. In today's operational environment, each deployment brings new challenges that require recon leaders to adapt quickly to changing conditions. Adversaries are constantly modifying their strategies and tactics. Civilian factors vary from village to village and region to region. The complexity of full spectrum operations requires recon leaders to maintain a broad and deep knowledge base. They can benefit greatly from sharing their knowledge and lessons learned during deployment. The P2P training methods contained in the guide can create a natural schoolhouse environment for sharing hard-won information.



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## Appendix A

Instructor's Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Learning Guide for the Army Reconnaissance Course (ARC)

**This appendix is located on a CD attached to the back of this product.**



## Appendix B

Instructor's Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Learning Guide for the Army Reconnaissance Course (ARC)

(Editable Version)

**This appendix is located on a CD attached to the back of this product.**

*Note:* This version is provided for those who wish to tailor the job aids.